

Consumer Information and Procedures

-- 3 Choices for Service

The passage of the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 has led to changes in the competition among providers of telephone service. In the recent past, consumers had to make only one choice of which company would provide long distance service. Now, the new competitive environment provides for up to 3 different choices of pre-selected telecommunications carriers – one for each different type of direct-dial calling. The Illinois Commerce Commission's Consumer Services Division advises telecommunications customers to "shop" for the calling programs which most closely match the services they need. For instance, it makes no sense to subscribe to a low rate program that has a high monthly fee if you do not use that program's level of service often enough to save money on the low rates. Following is an outline of the 3 levels of pre-selected direct-dial service.

Local Calling

This is your dial-tone provider's local area of service, and, while exceptions exist, it generally covers your hometown at a minimum. Most phone books contain information which explain the areas you may call using the local level of service, but the local company which serves you can provide you with the best explanation and details on your local calling area and the rates available for such calls. With the inception of competition, alternative telecommunications companies have begun providing this level of service to consumers in some places in Illinois. The Illinois Commerce Commission has the authority to grant certificates which allow companies to enter the competitive local market, but it cannot force a company to do so. For a list of companies which have either applied for a local exchange certificate or currently hold one, please click on this link: [Local Exchange Carrier Certificates](#)

Local Toll or IntraLATA Calling

In Illinois, there are 18 geographically separate Market Service Areas or MSAs. Nationally, MSAs are referred to most commonly as LATAs (Local Access and Transport Areas). Since the terms are synonymous, you may find that different phone companies or even different employees of the same company will use either name. Traditionally, consumers were assigned a carrier for those calls which fell outside their local calling area, but within their particular LATA. The map below outlines the boundaries of these LATAs:

LATA Boundary Map

Most telecommunications consumers in Illinois may pre-select any company of their choice for intraLATA calls. At this time, pre-selections are made on the system of the local phone company. If you have placed a restriction on your line to avoid unauthorized changes, you will need to contact your local phone company to lift the restriction any time you wish to change your selection for intraLATA service.

Currently, there are a few LATAs in Illinois which extend into our neighboring states. Some companies may hold exclusive service authority for direct-dial interstate intraLATA calls. Even if you have pre-selected another carrier for your intraLATA calls, the company with exclusive authority will carry direct-dial calls across our borders, but within the same LATAs. For questions about such calls, please contact the Federal Communications Commission. Their web site is located at: <http://www.fcc.gov/> or you may reach them toll free at 1-888-225-5322.

Long Distance or InterLATA Calling

The final level of service covers all calls placed to locations outside your particular LATA – ranging from calls to other LATAs in Illinois to calls on an international basis. As with your intraLATA service, a restriction or freeze placed by you with your local phone company may prevent your interLATA service from being changed without your authorization, but you will need to contact your local company to lift the restriction if you wish to change your pre-selected interLATA carrier. Once any changes are accomplished, you may place the restriction back on your service by contacting your local company again.

If you find that any of your services have been changed without your approval, please contact the Consumer Services Division online, or call toll free 1-800-524-0795.